Claims 1-27 are pending and under consideration.

CHANGES TO THE SPECIFICATION:

The specification has been reviewed in response to this Office Action. Changes have been made to the specification only to place it in preferred and better U.S. form for issuance and to resolve the Examiner's objections raised in the Office Action. No new matter has been added.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102:

In the Office Action, at page 3, claims 2-1, 4-12, 18, 21-22, and 24-27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 in view of Tsuji. This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

There are several key differences between Tsuji and the present invention. For example, the system of Tsuji has workstations connected to networks and each of the workstations includes, as shown in Fig. 1 of Tsuji, a processing log memory unit 22, received mail memory unit 24, sent mail memory unit 23, control information memory unit 21, and a task tracking unit. The system is configured in a manner such that a workstation of a sender of a message can obtain from the processing log memory units 22 of other workstations information about responsive actions taken by receivers of the message sent by the sender.

With the system of the present invention, a sender of a message is not required to collect information about actions taken by receivers of the message from a sender's terminal apparatus as the message processing apparatus manages messages. In contrast with Tsuji, a sender of a message must collect information stored in each of memories such as the processing log units 22 of other workstations if it is desired to discover the responsive actions taken by receivers of the message. The system of Tsuji, in particular, calls for all of the workstations connected to the network respectively to have the functions of collecting from other workstations and storing information about responsive actions taken by receivers of the message. The system of the present invention, as recited in claim 3, for example, calls only for the message processing apparatus to have the function of generating a receiver state list and the terminal apparatuses connected to the message processing apparatus via a network.

The independent claims, including, for example, claim 18, are amended so that a message processing apparatus of the present invention comprises a message management unit

12

enabling each terminal apparatus to compose, view and respond to messages and a generation unit generating a receiver state list.

As a result of the claim amendments, Claim 1 as amended, for example, describes the features that the terminal apparatuses mentioned in Claim 1 are not required to have functions such as those required with a workstation of Tsuji, and that a message processing apparatus, not a terminal apparatus, generates a receiver state list; as a result, the present invention is distinguished from Tsuji.

The examiner asserts in relation to Claim 4 , that Tsuji teaches a system wherein a receiver state list includes open information indicating open states of the message of the plurality of receivers, and completion information indicating that the message is confirmed, or that business related to the message is completed (Col.4 line 59 to Col.5 line 9). Tsuji, in the lines referred to here, describes that information indicating whether each of the receivers has took actions of 'return', 'accept', 'copy' and 'commentate' is collected merely by the workstation of a message sender. Tsuji in particular, discloses a way for a message sender to learn about actions taken by receivers of the message but fails to describe a way for a message receiver to lean about actions taken by other receivers of the same message.

Claim 4 and other claims of the present invention, in contrast, allow for receivers of a message to learn about other receiver statuses on actions taken in response to the message, by means of a receiver state list generated and held by a message processing apparatus.

Although the applicant does not admit the possibility of the receivers of Tsuji to learn about response actions of other receivers of the same message, by receivers respectively collecting information contained in units such as a processing log memory units 22; for the sake of argument, even if this were the case, this would involve exchanges of information contained in units such as processing log memory units 22 held respectively in workstations of all the receivers of a message, and, as a result, the traffic on the network for exchange of these data would become exceedingly heavy.

Claim 6 discloses the feature in which, when a message is amended after it has been mailed out, the open information of all the receivers contained in a receiver state list for this particular message are reset to indicate it is yet to be opened.

Lines between line 59 in col.4 and line 9 in col.5, and lines 26-47 in col.5 of Tsuji, referenced by the examiner, in contrary to what the Examiner asserts, does not teach the limitations of Claim 6, but instead only discloses that a workstation of a message sender collect

13

15

information contained in a processing log memory units 22 held in receiver workstations. A recovery unit in Claim 6 by resetting the open information of all the receivers for a message in a receiver state list automatically when the message is amended, ensures the list to reflect correctly the receiver states regarding the amended message. Consequently, Tsuji fails to describe any the limitations of claim 6.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103:

In the Office Action, at page 9, claims 3, 15, 19-20, and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 in view of Tsuji. In the Office Action, at page 11, claims 13-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 in view of Tsuji and Williams. The reasons for the rejections are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. The rejections are traversed and reconsideration is requested.

Dependent claims 3, 13-15, and 19-20 distinguish over the prior art for at least their dependence on one of independent claims 1 and 18 for the reasons noted in the 35 U.S.C. §102 discussion above. Independent claim 23 distinguishes over Tsuji for at least the reasons noted for claim 3 in the 35 U.S.C. §102 discussion above.

CONCLUSION

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that affect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

14

Serial No.: 09/189,410

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: ___7/2/2001___   By: _____
                                   Jon F. Hadidi
                                   Registration No. 46,427

700 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 434-1500

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via facsimile to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, D.C. 20231

on___July 2_____, 20 01

STAAS & HALSEY

By:_____

Date: ___July 2, 2001_____

15

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please AMEND the paragraphs identified by their beginning page and line numbers, as follows:

Page 1, line 20

There is a case where, when a plurality of members cooperatively do business, a leader transmits mails to the members to confirm whether or not the members have completed the business <u>activity</u>, in order to determine the business progress states of the members. In such a case, each member of the group prepares a mail for reporting whether or not his or her business <u>activity</u> has been completed, and transmits this mail to the leader. The leader reads the mails from all the members, and determines whether or not the business of each member has been completed. In such a case, the number of mails to be read increases as the number of members increases, and so the leader's job increases.

Page 2, line 8

Further, in order that a member other than the leader determines the progress states of other members, he or she should send mails to the other members to confirm their progress states [similarly to the above-mentioned] <u>in a fashion similar to that mentioned above</u>, and should receive their responses. Therefore, the process of transmitting and receiving mails between members becomes complicated.

Page 2, line 15

The displaying of received mails as a list has been conventionally performed, but in [this] <u>the</u> conventional method, only a list is displayed.

Page 2, line 18

There are many cases in which, when a mail is transmitted, a sender wishes to know whether or not the receiver confirms the contents of the mail. In a conventional electronic mail system, however, the sender can determine whether or not the receiver opened the mail but cannot determine whether or not the receiver actually confirms the contents of the mail. In a personal computer communications system or the like, when a receiver reads out a mail which

16

has been stored in a host computer, [is informed to a sender as considering] a sender is informed that this mail has been opened. According to this method, even if the terminal provided on a receiving side automatically reads out a mail from a host computer, this mail is handled as opened. Therefore, a sender cannot determine whether or not a receiver actually confirms the contents of a mail.

Page 4, line 15

For example, completion information which [informs] indicates that a receiver of the message confirms the contents of the message or that the business related to the message is completed, is included in the receiver state list. Thus, the sender of a message or receivers thereof can determine whether or not all the members who received the messages have confirmed the messages or whether or not the businesses related to the messages have been completed, by looking at the receiver state list. Accordingly, the states of all the receivers can be obtained simultaneously.

Page 5, line 14

A message management method of the present invention [is to] is used to display the formatted message related to a business [processing] process and the non-formatted message other than this business together with the message type as a receiver state list.

Page 9, line 21

According to this message processing system, a plurality of terminals 11 are connected to a server 13 through a line network 12 such as a LAN or the like. A message processing program 14 of the server 13 has the functions of preparing and transmitting a message for the terminals 11, as well as a function of displaying the list of [received messages] to the received m messages, the list of messages to be transmitted, received messages, and the like. A message file 15 is a file in which the information on a message sender side is stored. The title of the [message] message, a sender ID, the contents of the [message] message, or the like are stored in the message file 15. A message management table 16 is a table in which the information on a message receiver side is stored. A receiver ID, completion time and date, and comments to a message or the like are stored in the message management table 16. A member table 17 is a table for storing information about members who are destinations of messages. In this table, a member ID, names, a group which the members belong to or the like are stored.

17

Page 10, line 13

The message file 15 includes a region 15a for storing a message ID to be assigned to each message, a region 15b for storing a sender ID, a region 15c for storing a transmission time and date, a region 15d for storing the due date of a response to the message, a region 15e for storing a message type such as a job request, a display operation or the like, a region 15f for storing information about whether or not the message is confidential, a region 15g for storing a title, and a region 15h for storing the contents of the message. Further, the message file 15 includes a region 15i for storing a time and date when a message is updated, a region 15j for storing the ID of an examiner who examines whether or not the message is approved, a region 15k for storing examined results, a region 15L for storing the ID of an approver who approves the message after this message is examined, a region 15m for storing the approved results; a region 15n for storing the information about whether or not the examined and approved message is readable, and a region 15p for storing a comment pattern which is specified by the sender. The message file 15 further includes regions for storing attribute information such as the requirement for comments, important comment, urgent comment or the like, other than the above mentioned regions.

Page 11, line 14

The message type is the information indicating which one of a job request, an investigation, a process of making all of a specific matter fully [recognized,] recognizable, a requirement for opinions or requests from the members, or the like, is the content of a message. According to the present embodiment, if a message type is selected by a sender when a message is prepared, an attribute such as the requirement for the comment to be included in a response, the requirement for a NO/YES answer or the like, is automatically set according to the thus-selected message type. In the case where the investigation with a time limit, for example, is selected as a message type, attributes of a "requirement for comments", and "with a time limit" are automatically set [to] for the message. Accordingly, the sender does not need to set every attribute [to] for each of all the messages.

Page 12, line 7

Next, the message management table 16 includes a region 16a for storing a message ID, a region 16b for storing a receiver ID, a region 16c for storing a time and date when the message is opened, a region 16d for storing the completion time and date when the receiver opened the message and operated a definition button which will be described later, and a region

18

16e for storing comments to the message. The data stored in the message management table 16 are corresponded to the data stored in the message file 15 by the message ID.

Page 14, line 6

When a box indicating "with examination and approval" is clicked, and the names of an examiner and an approver are set, a check box provided in the section of "with examination and approval" is displayed in black, and a process corresponding to the designation of the examiner and the approver is performed (S14).

Page 14, line 19

Therefore, when a sender selects a job request as a message type as shown in Fig. 4, a "requirement for comments" and "with a time limit" are automatically set as attributes. Since the check boxes provided in "a requirement for comments" and "with a time limit" section are displayed in black as shown in Fig. 4, the sender does not need to set every attribute.

Page 17, line 21

When it is determined in step S29 that the message type is not the "process of making all of a specific matter fully recognized" (NO in step S29), the flow advances to step S31, and it is determined whether or not the message type is a "memorandum". If the message type is the "memorandum", the flow advances to step S32, and "confidential" is set as an attribute. If the "memorandum" is set as a message type when preparing a message, this message designates the sender, and the attribute becomes confidential. Therefore, the sender can store this message [to be seen only by himself or herself] so it is only seen by the sender.

Page 26, line 9

The receiver's name, the open time and data, the completion time and data, and comments which are obtained by the above-mentioned processes are transferred to the display and edit region (S72). It is determined whether or not processes terminate for all the receivers [who are] stored in the message management table 16, corresponding to the message ID (S73). In the case where processes do not terminate for all the receivers, the process returns in step S69, and the above-mentioned processes [repeat] are repeated. In the case where processes terminate for all the receivers, on the other hand, the contents of the display and edit region are displayed as the receiver state list 24 (S74).

19

Page 27, line 19

In the case where the transfer button 26 is operated, the process advances to step S48, and a transfer process is performed for transferring the received message to another person as it is. Further, in the case where the existing-message-transmission button 27 is operated, the process advances to step S49, and an existing-message-transmission process is performed for [newly preparing a message] preparing a new message using the text of the received message.

Page 28, line 7

When the title of a specific message is clicked while the received message list 20 is being displayed, the message type, the title, the contents of the message, and the like are displayed. If this is the first opening, the current time and date are stored in the region 16c for storing the time and date when the message management table 16 is opened. After the contents of the message are confirmed, the receiver performs an YES/NO check, inputs comments, or the like according to the message type. After that, when the definition button 23 is operated, the comments which are inputted to a comment section are written in the storage region 16e for storing the comment of the message management table 16, and the time and date when the definition button 23 is operated are written in the storage region 16d for storing a completion time and date, as a completion time and date. In the case where the "requirement for comments" or the "requirement for an YES/NO check" is set as an attribute of the message at this time, a process is not handled as completed even if the definition button 23 is operated without inputting comments or performing the YES/NO check. Consequently, the completion time and data are not written in the message management table 16.

Page 32, line 5

In the case where the message is returned in a not-opened state, the open time and date, and the completion time and date of the corresponding message ID of the message management table 16 are cleared (S138). Next, the current time and date are obtained (S139) to be written in a region 15i for storing the update time and date of the message file 15 (S140). Further, the amended data are written in the corresponding storage region of the message file 15 (S141). In the case where the message is returned in a not-opened state, since the comments which the receiver wrote are [kept as they are] not modified, response operations terminate after operating the definition button 23 if the receiver displays the amended message, confirms the contents, and [needs not] does not require to change the comments.

20

Page 33, line 12

Thus, in the case where data of the transmitted message are changed, the message can be returned in the not-opened state. Accordingly, when a message is amended, it is not necessary to prepare a new message again to be transmitted, so that the operations for preparing a message can be reduced. In the case where the amended message requires comments, and the comments to the amended message [need not] do not need to be changed, the receiver neither prepares a new response message nor inputs comments to the received message, since the comments which were previously prepared are stored [as they are] without modification. Therefore, the operations for a message response are reduced.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND the following claims:

Claim Amendments

1.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A message processing apparatus connected to a plurality of terminals via a network, [for processing messages transmitted from a plurality of terminals] comprising:

a message management unit enabling a user at each of said plurality of terminals to compose messages and to view and respond to received messages respectively; and

a preparation unit [means for] preparing a receiver state list indicating states of a plurality of receivers of a message that is managed by   said message management unit [whose destinations are the plurality of receivers; and

management means for managing information in the receiver state list].

2.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiver state list includes completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed [that receiver confirms] the message [,] or whether the receivers have completed [a] business activities related to the message [is completed].

3.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the message management unit enables the content of the message and the receiver

21

state list corresponding to the message [are] to be displayed on a terminal screen in an associated manner [, linked with each other].

4,   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiver state list includes:

open information indicating open states of the message of the plurality of receivers[.]; and

completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed [that] the message [is confirmed,] or whether the receivers have completed [that] business activities related to the message [is completed].

5.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising [:]

a storage unit [means for] storing the content of the message, receivers' names[,] and completion information indicating whether [that] the receivers [receiver confirms] have viewed the content of the message [,] or [that] whether the receivers have completed business activities related to the message, in an associated manner [is completed, corresponding to each other], wherein

the preparation unit [means] prepares the receiver state list based on the receivers' names and the completion information.

6.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 5, comprising:

an amendment unit [means for] amending the contents of a transmitted message stored in the storage unit: [means,] and

a recovery unit [means for] recovering all the receivers' open information indicating an open state to a not-opened state [whether or not the receiver opens the message from an opened state to a not-opened state] when the message is amended by the amending unit [means].

7.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 6 [5], wherein:

the storage [means] unit stores a plurality of comments prepared by the receivers in response to [for] the message; [,] and

22

24

the recovery [means] unit causes [makes] the comments stored in the storage [means] unit be stored without modification [as they are], when the transmitted message is amended by the amendment [means] unit.

8. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 5, wherein

the storage [means] unit stores a message type of the message, and

the preparation [means] unit prepares the receiver state list according to the message type, the receivers' names[,] and the completion information.

9. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 8, comprising[:]

a setting unit [set means for] displaying comment alternatives of comment patterns which correspond to the message type of the received message, in a comment section of the received message, and [for] setting a comment pattern which corresponds to a comment alternative selected by the receiver as the [receivers'] receiver's comment to the received message, wherein

the storage unit [means]includes a comment pattern storage portion for storing, corresponding to the message type, the comment [pattern] patterns and the comment alternatives which correspond respectively to the comment patterns.

10. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit enables [for enabling] a sender and all receivers of the message to [confirm] view the content of the message and the receiver state list on screens of the terminals.

11. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit provides a comment section for inputting a comment to the received message [is provided in the message,] and causes the comment inputted to the comment section to be [is] displayed as the comment of a corresponding [respective] receiver, in the receiver state list.

12. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit causes a delay state for a [regarding] response time

23

25

limit that [which] is set in the message to be [is] displayed as delay information in a received message list.

13. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

an open ratio obtaining unit [means for] obtaining an open ratio of the message from [the] open information indicating an open state of the receiver of the message, and

a display [means] unit [for] displaying the open ratio of the message in a message list.

14. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

a completion ratio obtaining unit [means for] obtaining a completion ratio from [the] completion information indicating that [receiver] the receivers of the message have viewed [confirms] the message, or that business activities related to the massage is completed[,] ; and

a display [means] unit [for] displaying the completion ratio which is obtained from the completion ratio obtaining unit [means,] in a message list.

15. (as ONCE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

a detection unit [means for] detecting designated keywords from receivers' comments; and

a counter unit counting [aggregation means for aggregating] a number of comments which include the keywords detected by the detection unit [means], wherein

the message management unit causes the [a] number of comments including the designated keywords to be [is] displayed on a terminal.

16. (as ONCE AMENDED) A message processing apparatus for processing a plurality of messages transmitted from a plurality of terminals, the message processing apparatus comprising:

a preparation unit [means for] preparing a message list for [of] displaying a formatted type message related to [a process of] business activities and a non-formatted type message not related to [a process other than] business activities, together with a message type; and

a message management unit [means for] managing information in the message list.

24

17.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A message management method for managing a plurality
of messages transmitted from a plurality of terminals, comprising [the step of]:

   displaying a formatted type message related to [a process of] business activities and a
non-formatted type message not related to [a process other than] the business activities,
together with a message type.

18.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A message management method for use by a server
apparatus connected via a network to [managing messages transmitted from] a plurality of
terminals, comprising [the steps of]:

   enabling a user to compose, view and respond to messages from one of the terminals;
and

   preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers
whom [of] a message is multi-addressed to [whose destinations are the plurality of receivers,
and displaying the receiver state list on a terminal].

19.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim
18, comprising [wherein said]

   displaying [step is to display] the receiver state list [linked with content of] in a manner
associated with the message.

20.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim
18, comprising

   displaying the receiver state list in a manner associated with the message,
wherein, the receiver state list includes receivers' names and completion information
indicating whether receivers of the message have viewed [that receiver confirms] the message
[,] or whether the receivers of the message have completed [that] business activities related to
the message [is completed, said displaying step is to display content of the message and the
receiver state list on a terminal linked each other].

21.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A message management method for use by a server
apparatus connected via a network to [managing messages transmitted from] a plurality of
terminals, comprising [the steps of]:

   enabling a user to compose, view and respond to messages from one of the terminals;
   preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom

25

[of] a message is multi-addressed to: [whose destinations are the plurality of receivers,] and managing information in [of] the receiver state list.

22.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 21, wherein the receiver state list includes receivers' [receivers] names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the message have viewed [that receiver confirms] the message [,] or whether the receivers of themes sage have completed [that] business activities related to the message [is completed].

23.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium [for] storing a program, the program comprising [the steps of]:
    enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to communicate with a server apparatus to compose, view and respond to a message; and
    displaying a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom a [of] message is multi-addressed to [whose destinations are the plurality of receivers and content of the message on a terminal, linked with each other].

24.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium [for] storing a program, the program comprising [the steps of:]
    displaying the receiver state list which includes receivers' names [of message] and completion information indicating whether receivers of the message have viewed [that content of] the message [is confirmed,] or whether the receivers of the message have completed [that] business activities related to the message [is completed], on a terminal.

25.   (as ONCE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium [for] storing a program, the program comprising [the steps of]:
    enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to compose, view and respond to a message; and
    preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom [of] a message is multi-addressed to [whose destinations are the plurality of receivers, and managing information of the receiver state list].

26.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The storage medium according to claim 25, wherein the receiver state list includes a plurality of receivers' names and completion information indicating

26

28

whether receivers of the message have viewed [that content of] the message [is confirmed,] or whether the receivers of the message have completed [that] business activities related to the message [is completed].

27.   (as ONCE AMENDED) The storage medium according to claim 26, wherein the program comprises [a step of]:

recovering [returning] open information for [about] all the receivers of the message indicating [from] an open state to a not-opened state when content of the transmitted message is amended by a sender, wherein

the receiver state list includes open information indicating whether [or not] the [receiver] receivers have opened the message.

27